Chapter 8: The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships

Institutional integrity (defined in the dictionary as, “moral soundness, honesty, uprightrightness”) must include adherence to local, state, and federal law; professional ethics; honest standards and fair practices in all interactions with internal and external entities; publication of materials which accurately describe the mission and programs of the institution; publication of policies and procedures which are clearly communicated and consistently followed; confidentiality of records or open records, as appropriate; academic freedom; and fair evaluations and fair workloads. By offering academic programs, the university implies that those programs are of high quality. The reputation of the institution depends upon the credibility of those who represent it; thus, a high standard of behavior must be modeled by the institution’s administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

The primary documents through which the institution disseminates information to its constituencies are the Bulletin (catalog), published biennially in hard copy and on-line; the university website, updated annually; the VCSU Student Handbook, reprinted annually and also available on the website; the staff handbook (NDUS Human Resource Policy Manual); and the faculty handbook (SBHE/VCSU Policy Manual). A listing and samples of other important documents published by the university are located in the resource room.

Evidence that the university is committed to ethical standards is found throughout the institution’s printed literature. University objectives, printed in the Bulletin, speak to a “liberal education of high quality” which develops “the moral values and commitments necessary for responsible citizenship and civic leadership.” The Student Handbook states that “Academic integrity in students is recognized as a fundamental objective of higher education. Traditionally it has been a highly regarded ideal in colleges and universities, one which symbolized the essence of learning.” The objectives of the teacher education program include the awareness “of the importance of professional and personal characteristics of effective teachers, such as... ethical behavior.” Numerous policies and publications relating to integrity may be found in resource room.

VCSU’s investigation of institutional integrity reviewed campus documents and policies, as well as the practices of specific offices and areas. The resulting assessment of VCSU’s compliance with Criterion 5 examines the policies and practices of institutional fairness in the University’s relationships with students, faculty, staff, and the community. A chart examining the relationships between the University and significant external entities may be found in the Appendix.

Relating to Students

Recruitment & Admissions. Valley City State University follows the rules and guidelines outlined by the North Dakota University System regarding the admission of its students. The guidelines describe the high school core curriculum
requirements, potential exceptions, and the appeal process for candidates who are denied admission. The university conducts its recruitment process in a non-discriminatory manner: a wide variety of activities and tactics are utilized throughout the recruitment process and applied to all students consistently and fairly. The application process and admissions requirements are described in the Bulletin.

**Tuition & Refunds.** Tuition rates and the refund policy are printed in the Bulletin. Tuition is assigned based on the number of credits for which the student has registered and the residency status of the student. When a student drops a course or withdraws from all classes, tuition refunds are granted on a pro-rated basis in accordance with the policy published in the Bulletin.

**Housing & Refunds.** Residence hall students sign a VCSU Room and Board Contract at the beginning of each year. The specific language of the contract addresses residence hall cancellation or withdrawal. In addition, all residence hall students receive timely e-mail notices on upcoming dates and deadlines.

**Financial Aid.** Valley City State University follows the rules and guidelines for distributing financial aid as outlined in Federal Regulations and the Department of Education Student Financial Aid Handbook. The university practices debt management that reflects well in the Department of Education Cohort Default Rate.

**Orientation.** The University’s orientation activities are outlined in the Bulletin. Prospective students and admitted students are informed of the schedule for summer orientation and opening school activities through direct mail pieces, brochures, and newsletters. Opening school activities and the Living to Learn class are explained to new students and parents during the summer orientation/registration program. Assessments are conducted annually on all programs. Committees of students, faculty, and staff are involved in the planning.

**Student Records & Privacy Act.** The Office of Admission and Records maintains directory information and educational records for all students, ensuring full protection and confidentiality of these records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). These records are maintained in a password-secured student information system (HECN) or, in the case of paper documents, in files secured by locks. Students are notified of their rights under the FERPA policy (as it pertains to release of directory information and educational records) through the Bulletin and the VCSU Student Handbook.

**Student Handbook.** The Student Handbook is updated and printed on an annual basis. While hard copies are made available throughout the campus and distributed at new student orientation activities, there are fewer hard copies each year and students are encouraged to access the on-line Handbook at the VCSU web page. The Handbook contains policy statements on Academic Integrity, Sexual Harassment, and Student Rights and Responsibilities. Each policy is reviewed annually prior to reprinting.
Policies related to Campus Security, The Drug Free School Policy, Sex Offenses, and Campus Crime Statistics are published and distributed to all students annually. Institutional records of student complaints are kept on file in the president's office and in accordance with federal regulations. Records are kept of all formal written complaints, signed by a student, and submitted to an institutional officer with the responsibility to handle the complaint.

**Departmental Publications for Students.** In addition to the *Bulletin*, program requirements are communicated to students through Fact Sheets developed by the Office of Admissions and various departmental publications. Documents are reviewed regularly to ensure consistency and currency.

**Guidelines for Student Athletes.** Valley City State University is a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics and a member of the DAC–10 Athletic Conference. VCSU follows rules for eligibility, participation, length of season, and dates of practice as established by the NAIA and the conference. A Board of Directors consisting of the president of each DAC-10 institution governs the activities of the conference.

**Student Government.** The Student Senate is the governing body for the Student Association that includes all Valley City State students. All student organizations are directly responsible to the Student Senate. The Senate is comprised of officers and student senators elected each spring semester. Through the Student Senate Finance Commission, the Student Senate controls and administers a large portion of the student activity fee. The Senate appoints numerous student representatives to University and Senate administrative duties and committees such as Faculty Senate, Athletic Committee, Curriculum Committee, Diversity Waiver Committee, Financial Aid Committee, Library Committee, and Teacher Education Committee. Students have also participated in faculty searches.

**Information Technology Center.** Valley City State University has three computer-related policies that apply to all faculty, staff, and students.

- State Board of Higher Education policy 1901.2 is the foundation for all VCSU policies related to computer and network usage (see <http://www.vcsu.nodak.edu/documents/policymanual/INDEX.htm>).

- The North Dakota Higher Education Computer Network (HECN) has adopted procedures in support of NDUS Policy Section 1901.2 (see <http://www.nodak.edu/hecn/policy/>).

- Title II of the Digital Millenium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998 limits the liability of online service providers, such as the North Dakota University System (NDUS), the Higher Education Computer Network (HECN), and Valley City State University for certain copyright infringement liability if various procedures are followed. The following policy is intended to take advantage of the liability protections in the DMCA (see <http://www.nodak.edu/hecn/dmca.html>).
A fourth policy applies to students only. It includes modifications and clarifications that accommodate the notebook computer initiative at Valley City State University. All students sign a computing resources contract at the beginning of each semester. The contract serves as a means of communicating the ethical and legal policies of computer and network usage and it charges students with the physical responsibility of hardware issued to them (see <http://itc.vcsu.edu/documents.htm>.

During the past three years there have been no cases identified that utilized VCSU computing resources to facilitate an illegal act. A few cases of inappropriate use (as defined in the student contract) occur each semester and are referred to the vice president for student affairs for disciplinary action. Their nature is rarely malicious. A typical example is an electronic message intended for a specific person inadvertently sent to an individual who is offended by the message. There has been a decline in the number of such instances reported during the past three years.

Student violations related to the responsibility for computer hardware cause the greatest concern for Information Technology Center staff. Several computers are lost each year due to students leaving with the computers and not returning them by the specific dates listed in the contract. The number of such losses has not declined during the past three years.

Websites created by faculty and students are subject to the guidelines established by the Higher Education Computer Network (NDUS 1901.2) and to the review of the Director of Web Services and the vice president for student affairs.

### Relating to Faculty

Academic Policy conforms to the *NDUS Policy Manual* and the *Valley City State University Policy Manual*. Both manuals are identified in the Baselines document given to faculty at the beginning of each academic year. Web links are provided all employees to enable ready access to system and university policy via their laptops or desktop computers. Policy changes made by the State Board of Higher Education at scheduled board meetings are distributed to faculty and staff by the president's office.

VCSU review of academic programs complies with national, state, and disciplinary accreditation and statutory responsibilities. NDUS sections 100 –1900 in addition to the Century Code of the State of North Dakota govern delegated authority for oversight of academic programs ranging from the hiring and termination of academic staff to program review. The VCSU policy manual parallels the NDUS manual with specific reference to policy and guidelines applicable to Valley City State University. For example, section 403.1-403.7 of the NDUS policies manual outlines a range of guidelines, practices, and standards to govern oversight of academic programs. Applicable VCSU policies are inserted in blue italics allowing quick link to the policy book maintained on the website. These policies range from Academic Freedom (401) to admissions policies, curriculum review, program termination, program review, enrollment reporting, common NDUS academic
calendar, and continuing education. Section 400 also identifies and defines the
degrees and certificates awarded by Valley City State University.

The faculty and administration endorse the concept and principles of shared
governance. Baselines identifies all institutional, faculty, and staff committees
including ad hoc and task force assignments. Reports and minutes are freely
accessible via the “I” Drive on the network. Interactions between VPAA and faculty
governance occur on a regularly scheduled program and complement ad hoc meetings
and mutual briefings. The President conducts similar meetings as well as posting
minutes of Executive Team meetings (the President’s advisory group) and Joint
Executive Team meetings (held once a month between MSU and VCSU).

Grievance, personnel issues, and tenure and promotion procedures are clearly
identified in both policy manuals. Additionally, opportunities for faculty
development, staff development, and supervisory skills are offered and encouraged
on a regular basis.

Faculty Contracts Procedures for faculty searches; appointments, rank, type of
contract, and salary determination; evaluation, promotion and tenure; dismissal
and grievance are contained in the policy manual predominately in sections 400
and 600 of the NDUS policy manual. Divisions identify faculty staffing needs
arising from retirement, departure, or opportunity, and division chairs make such
needs known through APAC. APAC, via the Vice President for Academic Affairs
makes such needs known at the Executive Team level where the President then acts
upon recommendations. Budget requests often but not always limit and proscribe
opportunities to replace faculty in an effective manner. The Vice President for
Academic Affairs makes recommendation to the President for all full-time, ranked,
faculty positions.

The need for part-time or adjunct faculty appointments, as delineated by the policy
manual, is determined by division chairs and subject to approval by the Vice
President for Academic Affairs. Division chairs in consultation with the Vice
President for Academic Affairs then recruit and hire adjunct faculty. A Masters
degree is the minimum degree required of all adjunct faculty. Bachelor degreed
adjuncts occur only in emergency or special circumstances determined by
consultation between departments, division chair, and Vice President for Academic
Affairs.

High School teachers employed through the Dual Credit program must submit
credentials including transcripts and recommendations in order to meet department
criteria for teaching college-level courses. They are subject to review and approval
by the participating department and/or division and are compensated via negotiated
agreements executed between the school district and Valley City State University.
All faculty are subject to review. Tenure policies dictate the criteria and the review
cycle for tenure-track faculty. Per NDUS policy, post tenure reviews are also required.
Adjuncts are subject to review at the end of each course taught or annually if
employed in consecutive semesters.
Orientation. New faculty sign the state-mandated loyalty oath for teachers, affirming that they will support the constitutions of the United States and state of North Dakota and faithfully discharge their duties as assigned. Copies of the signed oath are retained by the President’s Office.

Faculty Mentoring Program. In response to the increased replacement rate, a new, formal faculty mentoring plan was designed and implemented in the Fall of 2000. Each of the 12 new faculty were assigned two mentors, one from within and one from outside their home division. The first day of faculty contracts included a lunch with the Vice President for Academic Affairs with “living, working, and enjoying VCSU” as a theme. New faculty and mentors spent the second day at the Kathryn Center for Lifelong Learning experiencing a full day of team-building, confidence-building activities through low and high rope activities on the Adventure Learning course. Throughout the year, on a bimonthly basis, a series of faculty development workshops are held, with topics ranging from digital portfolios for students, to capturing and moving video, to using Blackboard courseware.

Rights and Responsibilities/Policy and Practice. North Dakota delegates its governing authority to the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE). Their authority is vested in the Chancellor while campus presidents exercise statutory and delegated authority. Board policy flows from the state government through the SBHE, to the Chancellor and the campus President. Individual campuses are free to set their own policy-making processes that comply and extend NDUS policy. VCSU policy development with regard to faculty honors and respects the notion of shared governance. Policy is developed through the faculty governance processes outlined in the charter for the Faculty Association. Committees are charged to read, review, and recommend revision. Per faculty policy, unanimity is required at the senate level. One dissenting vote from any divisional representative moves the proposal for general consideration and vote by the entire faculty association. Upon approval, the policy proposal is forwarded to the President’s Executive Team for approval or recommendation. For those issues defined locally, approval of the President leads to incorporation into the Faculty policy manual. For policy requiring SBHE approval, the President will, upon consent, carry the proposal to a scheduled SBHE meeting as an Action Item. As noted in earlier sections, system policies are coordinated with VCSU policies via hotlinks at both sites. Additionally, the faculty have cited numerous affiliations through disciplinary accrediting bodies (National Association of Schools of Music, International Society for Technical Education and North Central Association of Schools and Colleges) including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

VCSU’s commitment to shared governance leads to a commonly agreed set of operational rules and expectations. The policy and procedures are in a constant state of review and changes have been both speedy and terminally slow. Priorities are set by active dialogue between the Executive committee (administration’s main consultative arm to the President) and the leadership of the Faculty Association. In addition, the Vice President for Academic Affairs holds regularly scheduled briefings with the executive council of the faculty association. This past year, budget and personnel experiences necessitated a series of confidential briefings between the
VPAA and the executive council. Effective and consultative collaboration has been a priority of the current administration.

**Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure.** Faculty evaluation, promotion, and the award of tenure is conducted according to Valley City State University and NDUS policy. All instructional efforts are subject to regular evaluations or, by policy, can be instituted with cause. Pre-tenure or probationary faculty have a period of six years to attain tenure per the recommendation of the divisional evaluation committee to APAC and eventually to the President. The President makes her recommendation to the State Board for Higher Education (SBHE). Tenure status is granted only by the State Board for Higher Education (SBHE) and reserved to the department or university unit to which the faculty is assigned. Peer and student evaluations complement a self-evaluation where individual divisions set content and criteria.

The current VPAA informs those faculty eligible for tenure per institutional policy, then coordinates a pro-active process working with the Divisional Evaluation Committee to ensure fairness, high standards, and appropriate evidence. The VPAA then convenes and chairs the APAC discussion of a tenure recommendation, but does not vote. The recommendation of the APAC is then forwarded to the President.

Faculty on yearly or term contracts are evaluated by a divisional group of peers who visit the professor’s class, review student course assessments and the evaluee’s self-assessment. The committee of peers writes evaluations, meets and confers regarding their observations and then forwards a recommendation about renewal to the division chair. Similar comments and recommendations follow from the division chair to the VPAA to the President. Annual reports of evaluations including tenure are made to SBHE. Faculty evaluations of post-tenure faculty are, by NDUS policy, conducted at three-year intervals, or by faculty policy can be initiated at the request of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Post-tenure review of faculty is a necessary yet long neglected component of faculty review at VCSU. Divisions have now established schedules for post-tenure review. With the initiation of a schedule of program reviews of majors and stand-alone minors through 2009, a schedule of post-tenure reviews can compliment this commitment to program quality without undue workload issues. Recent (Fall semester 2000) deliberations regarding a new Promotion and Tenure policy will set the stage for a renewed effort to update and implement a post tenure review process.

**Faculty Records.** The official faculty files, with application materials, transcripts, letters of appointment, and evaluation, tenure, and promotion documents, are kept in the Office of the President. Additionally, should disciplinary letters resulting from grievance proceedings or disciplinary hearings occur, they are also are retained in that official file. Correspondence files and other documents relating to faculty work are kept in the VPAA and divisional offices. The university conforms to federal and state privacy regulations.

**Academic Freedom.** The faculty and administration subscribe to the tenets promoted by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). A number of personnel cases have challenged this right; however, clear university processes were able to settle disputes prior to litigation. Announcements, records and minutes
of all university committee meetings are regularly posted on the “I” drive on the university network. The integrity of the faculty member's scholarly and teaching work is examined and evaluated by prescribed guidelines and benchmarks.

**Grievance Procedure and Resolution of Disputes.** Policies describing the process of faculty appeal include NDUS 605.2 Standing Committee, NDUS 605.3 Nonrenewal, Termination or Dismissal of Faculty, NDUS 605.4 Hearings and Appeals, and NDUS 612 Faculty Grievances. The Special Review Committee was not often called to meet: it investigated a case in the 1970s and another in 1999. The 1999 Committee followed the guidelines as set forth in the VCSU Faculty Policy Manual and by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education: it investigated both sides of the issue, documented its research, and provided a report for the President of the University (the Committee had the option of making recommendations in its report). One copy of all documentation and the report was given to the President; all other copies of the documentation were destroyed.

Until February 2000, State Board of Higher Education policy called for two committees to address faculty grievances: the Special Review Committee and the Standing Committee on Faculty Rights. The new policies (605.2 and 605.4) retained only the latter committee, preceded by mediation if the parties so desire. Faculty members may appeal notices of termination or non-renewal through this process (as per policy 605.3).

**Relating to Staff**

**Hiring and Orientation.** Procedures for filling vacant staff positions at Valley City State University are described in the NDUS Human Resource Policy Manual. Staff vacancies are recruited for and filled according to the institution's Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity guidelines. Following the completion of the form, “Request to Offer a Position,” letters of appointment are issued to staff.

**Evaluation.** New employees are in a probationary status pending a satisfactory evaluation at the end of the initial six months of employment. During such period, the employee may be terminated with one week's notice with no right to appeal. Valley City State University has recently revised its method of evaluation for permanent employees. The new Responsibility Reviews (evaluations) will be administered to each broadbanded staff member during the 2000-2001 year and annually thereafter. The Position Description for each staff position and the university's values and guiding principles generate the Responsibility Reviews. The NDUS Human Resource Policy Manual informs the campus about policies and procedures related to staff employment. The Staff Personnel Advisory Committee (SPAC) has a membership of eight, two members being selected from each staff group.

**Grievance Procedure and Resolution of Disputes.** The Staff Personnel Board, a staff grievance committee appointed by the president, hears appeals and employee grievances as per Sections 27 and 28 of the NDUS Human Resource Policy Manual.
Potential grievances have been settled according to Policy 28.2. Records are kept with Personnel Records through the Human Resource Office.

### Relating to Diversity and Accessibility

**Affirmative Action.** The university policies in support of state and federal law prohibiting discrimination are printed in the *Bulletin*, the *Student Handbook*, the *Residence Hall Life Handbook*, the *Teacher Education Program Handbook*, the *Staff Handbook*, and the *Faculty Handbook* (Policy Manual). The equal opportunity and affirmation action plan are detailed in V603.2. In compliance with state and federal regulations, the University will seek prompt and equitable resolution of allegations of discrimination relating to race, religion, color, national origin, gender, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, and of allegations relating to sexual harassment.

The *Student Handbook* states that “students of Valley City State University are entitled to fair and equal treatment in access to the program, facilities, and activities of the University, in accordance with the constitution and laws of the United States, the constitution and laws of North Dakota, and the policies of the State Board of Higher Education.” The Student Bill of Rights (*Student Handbook*) describes the institution’s equal access policy. The twenty objectives of the teacher education program include the ability “to effectively plan and implement creative learning experiences for exceptional and minority culture students;” and “respect the rights and privacy of students and behave in ways consistent with their responsibility of helping to prepare people for a productive life in our democratic and pluralistic society.” Other documents from the campus including the *Residence Hall Life Handbook* and the *Staff Handbook* speak to awareness of differences.

Enrollment numbers for Fall 2000 showed increases in the numbers of international students, minority students, and Native American students. For the first time (in at least twenty years) an International Student Club has been recognized by Student Senate and is active on campus. In a recent ACT Opinion Poll, students rated “Racial Harmony at VCSU” a 4.03 on a five-point scale (with 5 being the highest possible score and last year’s national average a 3.66). VCSU’s rating by students in the category of “racial harmony” has shown an increase each of the last three times the survey was conducted (3.70 in 1995, and 3.87 in 1997).

Valley City State University has been an Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Employer throughout the last 10 years. It is no longer listed as an affirmative action campus, and a new Equal Access statement, developed this past year, is now included in all of VCSU’s publications including its web site:

**EQUAL ACCESS/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT**

Valley City State University is fully committed to equal opportunity in employment decisions and educational programs and activities, in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, for all
individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age or Vietnam-era veterans status.

More specifically, the University abides by the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as the implementing regulations of the Department of Education (34 CFR Parts 100, 106, and 104 respectively), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and North Dakota Human Rights Act of 1983.

Inquiries concerning compliance may be directed to the VCSU Office of Human Resources, (McFarland 208, 845-7424) or to the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 10220 N. Executive Hills Blvd., 8th Floor, 07-6010, Kansas City, MO 64153-1367.

VCSU is committed to non-discrimination in its educational policies and employment practices as required by law and public policy. All faculty and staff position vacancies are published and equal opportunity given to all persons who wish to be considered for such positions. Recruitment for all full-time, benefited administrative, academic, and professional classified staff positions includes the use of a search committee of at least three people to be appointed by the unit administrator at the time the unit requests authorization to fill a position opening. Unit administrators are urged to consider the importance of diversity when making appointments to the search committee. The search committee is involved in recruiting, screening, and interviewing applicants, with particular responsibility for affirmative action efforts to solicit and include applicants from under-represented and protected groups. Selection from the group of finalists chosen by the committee is the responsibility of the unit administrator. Depending on the type of position, the Director of Equal Opportunity (faculty) or the Director of Human Resources (classified staff) shall be considered an ex-officio member of each search committee and will be available to assist the committee in fulfilling its responsibilities.

National searches are conducted for permanent full-time faculty. The university’s goal is to hire the most qualified individual with emphasis on balancing gender and diversity; however, VCSU’s geographic location and salaries tends to limit the number of qualified minority applicants. Part-time faculty are recruited through regional searches with publication on the internet, regional colleges and universities and the state-wide major newspapers. Procedures for recruiting faculty and staff are detailed in V601.4, 601.5, and 601.6.

In administrative ranks, gender is equally distributed: the president is female; the three vice presidents are male. Three out of six division heads are female, as are three out of six department heads. One of the vice presidents is a member of a minority group. Of ten student service areas, eight are directed by females, while two positions are held by males.

A.D.A. Compliance. The Americans with Disabilities Act which became law on January 26, 1992 has application to the North Dakota University System. Since 1993, a steady stream of improvements has been made to VCSU facilities to bring the campus into compliance:
1993 Installation of Elevator in McCarthy Hall
1995 Installation of Elevator in Allen Memorial Library
1995 Upgrade of West Entrance to Student Memorial Union
1996 Upgrade of Bathroom in Allen Memorial Library
1997 Upgrade of West Bathrooms in Student Memorial Union
1998 Installation of Elevator in West McFarland Hall

The plan for future improvements to assure ADA compliance can be found in the VCSU Master Plan booklet, available in the resource room.

**Sexual Harassment.** The University as a public institution in receipt of federal financial aid as well as grants, subscribes to the tenets and obligations of the law expressly forbidding sexual harassment in the workplace. The University seeks to maintain its obligation by presenting workshops and professional development opportunities and by encouraging conference participation for employees in this area. Information about sexual harassment is disseminated to all staff during the orientation process and is available to faculty on the university website. Supervisory workshops are held annually to update institutional practices and supervisor knowledge. Additionally, staff workshops are offered in employee rights and responsibilities regarding sexual harassment. Behavior which infringes upon the rights of others is not tolerated and is made clear through policies on sexual harassment and consensual relationships published in the *Student Code of Conduct*, the *Student Handbook*, and the university website. The Career Services Office provides training for student employees in area of sexual harassment.

**Relating to Safety.** Valley City State University places the safety and well-being of its students, faculty, staff, and visitors above all other considerations. It is the policy of VCSU to provide and maintain safe and healthful working conditions. Valley City State University subscribes to recognized national standards of safety as defined in published materials of the North Dakota Workers Compensation Bureau, the State Fire Laws, and the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). Information about the Campus Security Act of 1990 is available through VCSU Policy 916 and SBHE 916.

**Risk Management.** With the loss of sovereign immunity, the state of North Dakota, through the Office of Management and Budget, established a Risk Management Division. This Division manages the Risk Management Fund, a self-retention fund, which pays liability claims against the state and its employees. Legislative and policy changes with regard to safety and risk management were also outlined by the State Board of Higher Education in Section 302.8 of its Policy Manual. This clarified the duties and responsibilities that the Risk Management Division has with regard to the universities and their Loss Control Committees in managing potential liability exposures, and created a win/win situation.

The office of the chief facilities officer has been assigned the responsibility of administering the University’s safety management program. All faculty, supervisors, staff, and other persons in authority are enjoined in the prevention of accidents and reduction of claims in the environment and operations under their control.
New staff receive instruction on general safety rules, emergency procedures, and procedures for reporting injuries and incidents. Some type of training is completed annually. VCSU is also piloting a new on-line safety training program, SafetyLogic, and plans to conduct employee safety training through this program.

Valley City State University complies with federal OSHA Hazard Communication Standard, 29.CFR 1910.1200. The Facilities Services Department maintains all Material Safety Data Sheets for chemicals used by the custodians. The chair of the Chemistry Department maintains a master list of chemicals that are used in the labs. Laboratory chemicals are stored in an explosion proof, ventilated room and a licensed, professional organization takes care of waste removal.

The campus Loss Control Committee is comprised of the director of facilities services (who serves as chair), a representative of the NDUS Loss Control Committee, the comptroller, the vice president for student affairs, the director of student center and student activities, a public relations person, the athletic director, and faculty and student representatives. The VCSU Loss Control Committee meets quarterly and the records are kept in the Facilities Services Office, as are Incident/Accident and Near Miss Reports.

Assessments of various state facilities provide an opportunity for present and future liability exposures to be identified and assessed, recommendations to be made regarding risk and financial management, and supporting documentation to be provided. A risk management assessment of Valley City State University was conducted February 23-25 and March 16-17, 1998. All buildings on the campus were included in the audit: only the areas with specific hazards or hazardous areas were noted in the report. At that time, it was noted that VCSU had very limited policies and procedures in place and that implementation of some policies and procedures could be improved. Recommendations included establishment of a Loss Control Committee; standardization of policy and procedure; safety training for all employees, faculty, and staff; review of contract agreements with outside entities which use campus facilities; liability waivers (“Facilities Use Agreements”) for participants of special events; upgrade of the fire alarm system; and general improvements in safety practices, signage and housekeeping.

Relating to Community

Full Disclosure / Public Access. North Dakota has an open meetings/open records law. The open meetings portion of the law applies only to campus entities to which the State Board of Higher Education has specifically delegated decision-making authority. At VCSU, the only such entity is the Faculty Association. In addition, a limited number of meetings to review personnel grievances are open only if the grievant approves. Generally speaking, minutes of campus groups are posted on a shared computer drive accessible to all faculty and staff.
The open records law provides that virtually all university documents may be viewed by anyone and copies provided for a nominal fee. The university’s annual budget is placed in the university library each year. The university reports campus crime statistics in accordance with federal law.

**Public Relations.** The President’s administrative assistant serves as the university’s public relations officer. She produces a weekly campus newsletter called *HotLine*, with input from all on campus. She faxes all significant press coverage of the university to the Chancellor for distribution to the Board. She is the primary point of contact for relations with all media. The President is the designated spokesperson for the university on all major events.

Key publications for internal distribution also include *Baselines*, distributed annually to all university employees at the beginning of the school year. The booklet contains the university’s mission, vision, values, management philosophy, strategic plan, progress report, organizational chart, committees, and other fundamental information. All employees also have access to the university’s *Report to Investors* (annual accountability document) and a brochure explaining the partnership with Mayville State, upon request. In addition, all personnel have easy access to mass distribution of information by voice mail or email to faculty, staff, and students. Rarely does a day go by without at least one such news item. The Executive Team holds open meetings for all on campus for major issues (such as budget development) which would benefit from opportunities for discussion.

The university strives to maintain and enhance relations with the community through diverse methods. The public relations assistant coordinates and oversees press releases on university news. The president writes a weekly column for the local newspaper. For five years, the university and community co-sponsored monthly information-sharing sessions for all interested citizens. The sessions were discontinued in 1999 due to declining attendance. The university has a voting ex officio seat on the Chamber of Commerce board of directors, and a university representative actively participates in that organization. The president is a voting ex officio member of the Valley City-Barnes County Development Corporation, the local economic development organization. That group has formally declared that the information technology skills of VCSU graduates are the area’s most valuable renewable resource, making information technology the focus of its initiatives. At their own initiative, several VCSU employees are actively involved in area convention and visitors’ bureau events and projects and other major community initiatives.

Town hall meetings are informal, open campus meetings, held whenever necessary. The purpose of those meetings is to inform the campus and community of the current status of key issues, events, and plans.

**Third Party Comments.** As part of VCSU’s preparation for the 2001-2001 comprehensive evaluation, the Institutional Improvement Committee (which served as the steering committee for the self study) identified the primary constituencies of the University. These included alumni, public school educators, regional partners, and the local community.
The committee identified several campus-generated publications widely distributed among these groups: The Alumni Bulletin, the Education Division’s Update (which is mailed to all teacher education alumni, school administrators, public school teachers’ lounges, and Partners in Quality participants in the three state region of North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota), and the student newspaper, The Viking News. The Alumni Bulletin and the Update published the Third Party Comment notice in their Spring 2001 editions, as their fall publications would be too close to the team visit. The Viking News did not publish a late spring edition; the notice will run in its first Fall 2001 edition. VCSU’s local NCA website posted the notice early in the Spring 2001 semester, as well.

The committee also identified three newspapers that serve the region and a large number of VCSU’s constituents, The Valley City Times-Record, the Jamestown Sun, and The Fargo Forum. The Times-Record, whose readership is primarily Barnes County, ran the third party comment notice three times in July; the Jamestown Sun, with readers primarily in neighboring Stutsman County, where VCSU teaches evening classes at the State Hospital, ran the notice once in July; and the Fargo Forum, which covers neighboring Cass County and the Fargo area, ran the notice once early August. To conserve finances, the notice was run as a legal notice in the Forum; the other two newspapers and the campus-generated publications ran the notice as a 3x5 inch block ad.

These six methods of disseminating information, plus the notice on VCSU’s website, appeared to reach a broad range of the University’s public constituencies. Copies of all the published notices are available in the Resource Room.

**Strengths**

- The University publishes and makes available to its constituencies a Bulletin, handbooks, webpage, and other publications that accurately describe its mission, academic programs, policies and procedures (including appeal and grievance processes), accreditations, affiliations, and relationships.

- The University conducts business with other entities and educational institutions ethically and responsibly.

- The past several years have shown an increased number of new faculty hires (12 in 1999-2000 and 6 in 2000-2001). This has motivated the academic divisions to create and implement a more deliberate orientation program.

- Faculty, staff, and students have open access to the administration of the university.
Challenges

- All publications require a consistent process for review and revision. VCSU and SBHE policies may not be as well-known to campus constituencies as they should be. Scheduling regular reviews of all handbooks by those for whom they are intended would ensure familiarity and upgrading of policies.

- Communication about the functions of various campus offices and personnel could be improved.

- Post-tenure review schedules must be implemented.

- There is little in VCSU publications which speaks to academic ideals.

- There is a clear need to standardize new faculty orientation processes. An orientation guide (or folder) for new academic employees would help their acclimation to the campus.